

of work to do. There are going to be a few specific issues that we spend a lot of time on. One in particular that I should note is that the devastating impact of Hurricane Sandy is still being felt by families all across New York and New Jersey, parts of Connecticut. We are very pleased that under the leadership initially of Janet Napolitano and FEMA, but now Shaun Donovan, who's heading up a Task Force, we're focusing not only on recovery, but now on rebuilding and making sure those communities come back stronger than ever and people get the help that they need. So that will be an important topic because it's really going to be an interagency concern.

The second thing that we'll be talking about, obviously, is what's on the minds of a lot of American families across the country, and that is making sure that we get this fiscal cliff dealt with and that middle class taxes don't go up. I already spoke extensively about that today. I'll just repeat: There is no reason why taxes on middle class families should go up. It would be bad for the economy. It would be bad for those families. In fact, it would be bad for the world economy. And so I think it's very important that we get that resolved, and I am very open to a fair and balanced approach to reduce our deficit and provide the kind of certainty that

businesses and consumers need so that we can keep this recovery going.

And obviously, we'll be spending some time talking about national security issues as well.

But I just want to say thank you to this extraordinary Cabinet for a job well done. And I will take this opportunity to publicly embarrass two members of the Cabinet whose birthdays are either today or tomorrow: Ric Shinseki of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Happy birthday to you. And that is actually today. And Janet Napolitano's birthday is tomorrow.

All right, guys. Thank you. We want to get back to work.

U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Susan E. Rice

Q. Mr. President, do you think the Hill is being fair to Susan Rice in its meetings?

The President. Thank you so much, guys.

Q. Any thoughts on that at all?

The President. Susan Rice is extraordinary. I couldn't be prouder of the job that she's done as the USPR.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:11 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Statement on the Anniversary of the Birth of the Founder of Sikhism November 28, 2012

I send my best wishes to all those here in America and around the world who are observing the anniversary of birth of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the first Sikh guru. As always, this is a time to celebrate the principles of equality, respect, service, and interfaith cooperation that are the core of the Sikh faith and to recognize the extraordinary contributions that Sikh Americans make to our country every day. This

year, we also remember the innocent lives that were lost in the unspeakable violence directed against the Sikh congregation at the *gurdwara* in Oak Creek, Wisconsin. I can think of no better way to honor their memory and to join our Sikh friends as they mark this sacred time than to recommit ourselves to the spirit of pluralism, equality and compassion that define both the Sikh community and our Nation.